

## **Overview of the American Community Survey**

### **America Is Changing, and So Is the Census**

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The American Community Survey (ACS) is the cornerstone of the government's effort to keep pace with the nation's changing population and ever-increasing demands for timely and relevant data about population and housing characteristics. The new survey will provide current demographic, socio-economic and housing information about America's communities every year – information that until now was only available once a decade.

Starting in 2010, the ACS will replace the long-form census questionnaire that was sent to about 1-in-6 addresses in Census 2000. And as with the long form, information from the ACS will be used to administer federal and state programs and distribute more than \$200 billion a year.

### **Knowledge is power; ACS will provide it**

Between decennial censuses, local governments, organizations and businesses cannot rely on increasingly out-of-date census data to assess and finance local needs, such as where to build new roads, schools or senior centers. Costly mistakes can result when planners do not have current data on which to base their decisions or when local communities do not get a fair share of state or federal funding to help fund local projects.

### **Annual results will be available for all areas by 2010**

Starting in 2006, data will be available annually for all areas with populations of 65,000 or more. For smaller areas, it will take three to five years to accumulate a large enough sample to produce annual data. For example, areas of 20,000 to 65,000 can receive data averaged over three years. For rural areas, small urban neighborhoods or population groups of less than 20,000, it will take five years to accumulate a sample size comparable to the decennial census. These averages will be updated every succeeding year.

### **ACS expands nationwide in 2005**

In 2005, a rolling, random sample of housing unit addresses throughout the United States and Puerto Rico began receiving the American Community Survey in the mail every month. Each year, about 1-in-40 addresses, or 2.5 percent of the nation's population, will represent their communities when they respond to the survey. Survey recipients that do not respond after a reminder mailing will be contacted by phone, and 1-in-3 addresses that still do not respond will be visited for an in-person interview.

(more)

**Responses are required by law – and they are confidential**

Households that receive the American Community Survey are required by law to respond. As with all other census answers, a Federal law, Title 13 of the U.S. Code, provides strong confidentiality protections for all individual information collected by the Census Bureau. Violating this law is a Federal crime with serious penalties, including a prison sentence of up to five years and a \$250,000 fine.

For more information, visit the American Community Survey Web page at <http://www.census.gov/acs/www>.

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